

Mayoral Combined Authorities recommendations

April 2021

About us

Centre for Ageing Better

The UK's population is undergoing a massive age shift. In less than 20 years, one in four people will be over 65.

The fact that many of us are living longer is a great achievement. But unless radical action is taken by government, business and others in society, millions of us risk missing out on enjoying those extra years.

At the Centre for Ageing Better we want everyone to enjoy later life. We create change in policy and practice informed by evidence and work with partners across England to improve employment, housing, health and communities.

We are a charitable foundation, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, and part of the government's What Works Network.

We have strategic locality partnerships with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Leeds City Council and Leeds Older People's Forum and Lincolnshire County and District Councils. We also support the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities. Currently over 45 places are part of this movement, from cities and towns, to districts and counties, covering around 22 million people.

Regions ready for ageing

Mayoral and other Combined Authorities have powerful leadership roles in enabling people to remain healthy and active well into their later lives. However, few are taking into account the massive age shift taking place that means regional social and economic policies must respond to the realities of a large and growing population in mid and later life.

The pandemic has exposed the long-standing health and economic inequalities within our society. It has also shown that a strong economy requires a healthy and resilient population and a focus on the group approaching later life (aged 50-70) will support this in the short and long term as we come out of, and also continue to live with, COVID-19. People are our greatest asset and investments in the physical and social infrastructure of regions that promote and protect the health and wellbeing of the population are among the best economic investments that regions can make. In addition, Combined Authorities can champion a vision of inclusive growth that makes the most of the economic opportunities of our longer lives by supporting older workers and harnessing the considerable spending power of older consumers.

National government must play a supporting role and we will continue to advocate for the kind of devolution and funding that enables the tailoring of solutions for local populations, including a sustainable funding settlement for health and social care services, sufficient funding for public health and a fit for purpose adult training and skills budget.

We are calling for more Combined Authorities to take a strategic approach to ageing, including through becoming an [age-friendly](#) region like Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region and London. This includes involving with older residents, analysing local data to identify where resources can be pooled and where specific funds should be targeted to help residents age well.

Through our work we have identified a number of key actions combined authorities can take to improve later lives within devolved powers.

Economy and Growth

- Inclusive growth strategies should take account of age and its intersections with other protected characteristics.
- Regional intelligence functions should ensure data is disaggregated by age and routinely analysed in relation to older age groups from 50 up.
- Commit to [becoming an age-friendly employer](#) leading by example and encourage employers in your area to do the same, including your supply chain businesses.
- Local economic strategies, to prioritise action for 50+ workers, and maximise the economic participation of people in mid and later life.

Education and skills

- Promote actions for older workers within regional labour market strategies and commissioning. This includes the principles of [age-friendly employment](#) and having tailored employment support for over 50s.
- Develop and fund local action that promotes access to skills development and tailored back to work support for those in mid to later life, including ringfencing adult education funding for over 50s.
- Market apprenticeships to all ages and maximise the spend of the apprenticeship levy for large employers or transfer the levy to SMEs to increase the number of over 50s apprenticeships.

Housing and planning

- Ensure new homes and developments meet the needs of all ages, including setting minimum targets for new builds to meet Part M(4) Category 2 standard of the Government’s national technical housing standards and an appropriate proportion that meets the higher wheelchair accessible standard Part M(4) Category.
- Use schemes on public sector land, and new opportunities such as mayoral development corporations to set a high benchmark and pilot new models of aspirational, accessible, and inclusive developments.
- Take a regional approach to improving existing homes to make them safe, accessible, warm and comfortable as well as digitally connected. Retrofitting and renovating housing alongside decarbonisation changes will deal with two pressing issues at the same time and create local jobs.

Health and social care

- In partnership with Integrated Care Systems, identify the key drivers of health inequalities and causes of disability in midlife in your region and develop a plan to increase disability-free life expectancy and prevent poor health.
- Promote whole systems and regional approaches to support more people in mid and later life to be physically active, including investing in evidence-based community strength and balance programmes to help people maintain functional ability and independence as they age.
- Ensure Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans tackle barriers that specifically prevent people in mid and later life from walking and cycling, such as perceptions of safety.
- Sign and promote the [Healthy ageing: consensus statement](#) across your area.

Transport

- Take up bus franchising powers to increase provision in under used, less traditionally profitable, routes.
- Promote public transport services and infrastructure that are accessible and inclusive to people in mid and later life, including training for staff.
- Involve older adults, including older commuters and those with physical and cognitive impairment, in the design of new facilities and vehicles.

Let's take action today for all our tomorrows.
Let's make ageing better.

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